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Evaluation of Selected Components of: A Supplementary Center for Early Childhood Education. Title III.
Englewood Public Schools, N.J.; Scientific Resources, Inc., Union, N.J.

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In evaluating the effectiveness of a supplementary center for early childhood education it was hypothesized that a nongraded organizational structure would allow for an orderly and meaningful transition from preschooler type play activities to the more formalized learning of the primary age child. It was also believed that a school's primary objective is the building of a healthy self-concept in every child. The study called for the use of interview data, observational data, and interview questionnaires. The data indicated that teachers felt the program did provide an opportunity for the staff to achieve a greater understanding of the developmental needs of individual children, and enabled them to identify potential problem situations, as well as evaluate childrens' progress. Teachers also reported that the program helped children to develop a positive self-concept, especially the older children, who developed good peer relationships and experienced success. Teachers expressed concern that the program did not allow enough time to work with the individual young child. They felt that the greatest variation in ability, interest, and maturity occurred between the 5 and 6-year-olds. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document]. (JF)

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EVALUATION OF SELECTED COMPONENTS
OF: A SUPPLEMENTARY
CENTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION

TITLE III
ENGLEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION

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I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the spring of 1966, the Board of Education, Englewood, New Jersey, established a Supplementary Center for Early Childhood Education under Title III of the Elementary-Secondary Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-10).

The major objectives of the Supplementary Center for Early Childhood Education as stated in the original proposal were:

1. To demonstrate that each child's learning and development will improve if instruction is more individualized to account for his unique personality, abilities, learning style and rate of development; that each child has special needs due to his background which may differ socially, economically, racially or intellectually; that when special emphasis is given to the development of a wholesome self-concept at the pre-school ages (four and five-year olds) that a firm foundation is built for the acquisition of functional skills; the development of the ability to use knowledge and understanding of the world in later years; and self-directed independent learning.
2. To demonstrate that the concepts, skills, and activities begun at the pre-school level can be consolidated and extended to facilitate the continuous progress of each child by reorganizing the primary school into a nongraded structure encompassing the early childhood.
3. To incorporate into a public school program recent relevant research findings in the fields of child development, curriculum materials, methods and techniques of instruction, and administrative organization thus improving the learning opportunities for all children and contributing significantly to the field of education by making visible these findings in classroom and school practices.

In order to implement the stated objectives, the Englewood Public Schools instituted a nongraded organizational structure including a team arrangement for staff called a "cluster." Groups of teachers were assigned to groups of children for whom they planned programs and evaluated progress. School aides (paraprofessionals) were added to the teams. Specialists--psychologist, social worker, reading consultants, and speech specialist also assumed new roles in relation to staff, children, and parents.

The cluster label was assigned to an inter-grade (interage) group ranging in size from approximately 45 - 90 children. Clusters varied in age membership with one cluster of four and five year old children, some clusters of five and six year old children, and one cluster of four, five, and six year olds. In the school year 1966-67, 446 children were enrolled in cluster classes with 17 teachers and 12 aides.

For the school year 1967-68, it was projected that the majority of children; ages four, five, and six, enrolled in the Englewood Schools would be included in the nongraded organizational plan. In addition, seven and eight year old children were added to some clusters.

It was hypothesized that the nongraded organizational structure at the primary and elementary levels would allow for an orderly and meaningful transition of learning activity from the play activities, which characterized the preschooler, to the more formalized systematic learning associated with the acquisition of skills in the primary age child.

Fundamental to the total approach was the belief that the prime objective of the school in the early years is the building and strengthening of a healthy self-concept in every child.

In addition, the project was concerned with research in two aspects: (1) to close the gap between research findings and school practice; and (2) to extract from the variety of activities and organizational arrangements, evidence that would provide guidelines for further developments in Englewood and throughout the county.

It was felt that the nongraded organizational structure was especially relevant to the educational needs of Englewood where there is a diversity

of economic, social and intellectual background in the general and school population.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to evaluate selected components of the Englewood Public Schools Title III project--A Supplementary Center for Early Child Education (Grant #OEG 1-6-6611J-0977, Project #115) for the school years 1966-68.

Specifically, the evaluation focused on the "effectiveness" of the non-graded (cluster) organizational structure in meeting the stated objectives of the project, as that effectiveness may be assessed by teacher judgments, by professional and paraprofessional staff judgments, by the judgments of special consultants in early childhood education, and by an analysis of teacher perceptions.

For the purpose of this report, the term "nongraded (cluster) organizational structure" refers specifically to the procedures and techniques, including inter-grade (inter-age) grouping, the use of paraprofessionals, cluster staff patterns, and individualized instruction, described in the Title III (1966-68) proposal submitted by the Englewood Public Schools.

The evaluation design gives priority to the following questions:

1. To what extent has the nongraded (cluster) organizational structure, as implemented by the Englewood Public Schools, Title III program for 1966-68, given the teacher the opportunity to individualize the educative process for children in the program?

2. To what extent have the "artificial barriers" between grades been modified and removed?
3. To what extent have teacher attitudes related to project expectation been modified by participation in the non-graded (cluster) organizational structure?
4. To what extent has the team "cluster" arrangement for staff, including the use of paraprofessionals, achieved role definition and working relationships?

3. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The design of this study calls for the use of interview data, observational data, and interview questionnaires.

Instruments designed for the collection of data focus on the major evaluation questions. Since the report is descriptive rather than statistical, the instruments are semi-structured to permit a wide latitude in eliciting spontaneous comments and opinions.

Sources of Data

The following sources were utilized in providing data for the report:

1. Classroom teachers involved in the nongraded organizational structure (cluster).
2. Teacher Aides (paraprofessionals).
3. Special area personnel including helping teachers in the areas of physical education, music, and art.
4. Special service personnel including psychologists, social workers, remedial reading specialists: speech consultants and bilingual teachers.
5. Special classroom teachers functioning as resource teachers.

6. Building principals (5) in buildings where the nongraded (clusters) classrooms were operative.
7. Classroom observations: classes to be selected on the criteria of teacher experience in the program.

Treatment of Data

In order to provide answers to the major questions asked by the study, the following procedures were followed:

1. Interview questionnaire data is summarized and includes samples of comments where such comments are definitive in terms of program goals.
2. Observational data is presented in narrative and descriptive form.
3. Analysis of Results follows accepted research procedures.

Definition of Terms

Paraprofessional (Teacher Aide) - An unlicensed adult, drawn from the community, paid to assist the teacher in a variety of ways, clerical or instructional, thereby personalizing further the work of the school under the direction of the professional.

Pupil Personnel Services - Specialists in curriculum, psychology, social work, reading and speech, available to work with teachers, children, and parents.

Resource Teacher - A licensed teacher, working on a part-time basis, whose function is to release the teacher for planning purposes and for enrichment of the curriculum.

Clusters - A team of teachers is assigned to a multi-age group of children for whom they share the responsibility for planning learning programs and evaluating the progress of each child. The classrooms used by clusters

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are subdivided into areas for various kinds of learning. Teacher aides assist in each cluster unit.

Direction - The Center is moving towards extending the nongraded pattern, multi-age grouping, and team teaching (clusters) to all young children. During the next school year, most 5, 6, 7, and some 8 year old children will be assigned in this way.

Multi-Age Groupings in Nongraded classes - Children are assigned to groups, which contain a two to three year age span. They work together in the same classroom with the same teachers.

Nongraded Curriculum - Instruction in the nongraded system is geared to each child so that he is able to progress according to his abilities, level of development, and rate of learning. It is a learning plan based on an overall evaluation of each child. The main questions are:

"What is this child ready for"?

"How shall we provide for him"?

The focus is thus on the child, not on the artificial barriers and predetermined content of grade levels.

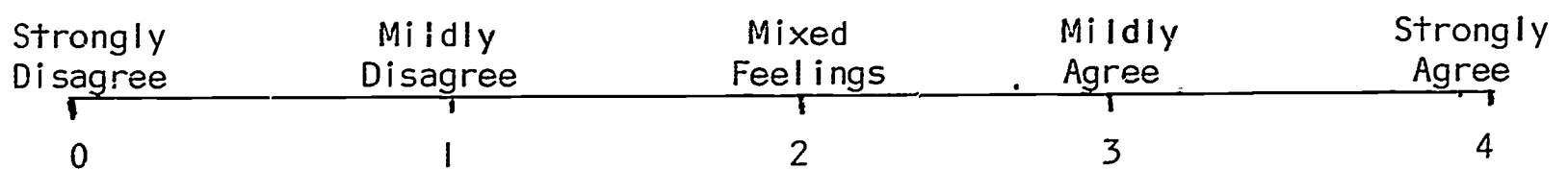
Wholesome Self-Concept - A child needs to feel he is somebody, he is worthy, he is able. It is upon this foundation that a child is free to learn to read, to absorb subject matter, to develop concepts. A child who experiences success in learning may better enjoy school.

4. RESULTS

The evaluation design gives priority to the following questions:

1. To what extent has the nongraded (cluster) organizational structure, as implemented by the Englewood Public Schools,

Title III program for 1966-68, given the teacher the opportunity to individualize the educative process for children in the program? Table 1 presents a summary of staff perceptions of programmatic effectiveness in individualizing instruction. Results are reported by Mean Rating Scores along the following continuum:



In addition, Table 2 presents a summary of staff perceptions of programmatic effects on children's self-concept. Results are reported by Mean Rating Scores along the following continuum:



2. To what extent have the "artificial barriers" between grades been modified and removed? Table 3 presents a summary of staff perceptions of programmatic effectiveness in removing the "artificial" barriers between grades. Results are reported by Mean Rating Scores along the following continuum:

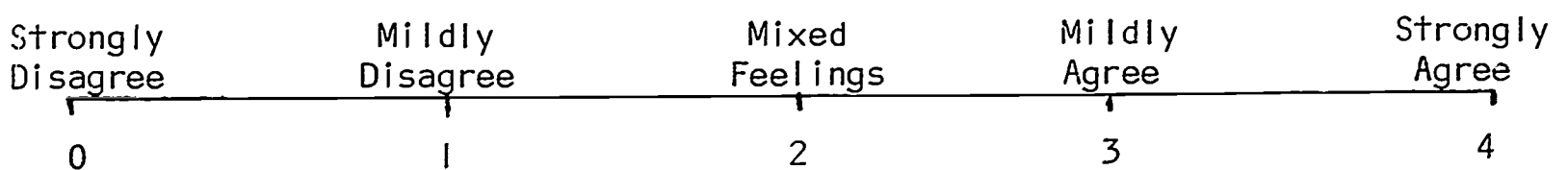


TABLE I

Summary of Staff Perceptions, by Mean Rating Score, of Programmatic Effects in Individualizing Instruction		Mean Rating Scores				
ITEM	Years in Cluster	Cluster Teacher			RT* N=12 1 Yr.	SMS* N=2 2 Yr.
		N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.		
1. I was able to spend more time with each child according to his needs.		2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	0.0
2. I feel there was too much emphasis placed upon keeping order in the classroom.		.8	.8	.8	1.4	0.0
3. I was able to discuss my perceptions of individual children with other professionals.		3.2	3.4	3.3	3.4	1.0
4. I feel I had time to work with the rapid learner.		2.4	2.4	2.4	2.3	0.0
5. I had time to work with the average child.		2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8	1.0
6. I was able to give children help when they needed it.		2.6	2.6	2.6	2.9	0.0
7. I was able to stimulate each child to attain achievement levels commensurate with his ability..		2.8	2.6	2.7	2.3	0.0
8. I was able to evaluate the progress of individual children.		3.2	3.2	3.2	3.0	0.0
9. I feel that the program was able to accommodate the slow learner.		2.7	2.5	2.6	3.1	1.5
10. I feel that the children were given a wide variety of experiences.		2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	1.0
11. I was able to make adjustments in classroom activity according to the developmental and maturational growth rates of individual children.		3.0	3.0	3.0	2.6	1.0
12. I was able to identify and understand the potential of individual children.		3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	.5
13. I was able to recognize indications of failure in individual children.		2.9	3.1	3.0	3.0	1.5

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

Table 1 (cont'd)

ITEM	Mean Rating Scores				
	Cluster Teacher		RT*		SMS
	N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.	N=12 1 Yr.	
14. I feel that I was able to identify the "gifted" child.	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.2	1.0
15. I was able to recognize symptoms of physical problems.	3.3	3.5	3.4	2.7	2.0
16. I was able to develop a multi-curricular approach for the cluster.	2.6	2.8	2.7	1.5	1.0
17. I feel that I was able to gain an awareness of children as individuals.	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.1	0.0
18. I was able to create a teaching atmosphere free from pressure related to pre-set academic standards.	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.8	1.0
19. I was able to help children with special problems.	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.0	0.0
20. I feel that the program enabled me to find "face-saving" devices.	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.5	1.5
21. I was able to help children with specific learning problems.	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.2	0.0
22. I feel that the program was able to accommodate the insecure child.	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.7	0.5
23. I was able to individualize the curriculum.	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	1.0
24. I was able to learn the outside-of-school interests of children.	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.5	1.0
25. I was able to transfer children to appropriate groups when such transfer made good educational sense.	3.3	3.0	3.1	2.5	0.0
26. I was able to spend time trying new methods and approaches to teaching individual children.	2.8	3.3	3.1	2.6	1.0
27. I was able to develop routine tasks that were flexible enough to prevent them from being boring.	2.8	3.2	3.0	2.7	0.5

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

Table 1 (cont'd)

ITEM	Mean Rating Scores				
	Cluster Teacher			RT*	SMS*
	N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.		
28. I was able to use a variety of teaching techniques depending upon the needs of individual children.	3.1	3.2	3.1	2.9	0.0
29. I was able to get a feel for the limitations of individualized children.	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.2	0.0
30. I was able to use curriculum in keeping with each child's interest and abilities.	2.8	2.3	2.6	2.5	0.5

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

TABLE 2

Summary of Staff Perceptions, by Mean Rating Score, of Programmatic Effects on Children's Self Concept

ITEM	Mean Rating Scores				
	Years in Cluster		Cluster Teacher		
	N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=59 Avg.	N=12 1 Yr.	N=2 2 Yr.
1. I feel the children were helpful to each other.	2.6	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.0
2. I was able to emphasize a child's strengths rather than his weakness.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.0
3. I feel that children were able to develop their physical skills.	2.8	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0
4. I feel that the students were able to accept differences in each other.	3.2	2.8	3.0	2.8	1.0
5. I feel that the children developed good peer relationships.	3.1	3.0	3.1	2.8	1.5
6. I feel that pupil morale and behavior were enhanced.	2.2	2.0	2.1	2.5	0.0
7. The students were accepted by their peers outside the school.	3.2	2.7	3.0	2.5	1.0
8. I was able to provide success experiences for my youngsters.	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.0	1.5
9. I feel that it was easy for a child to become an "isolate."	1.6	1.0	1.3	1.1	3.5
10. I was able to intercept problems at an early stage.	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.3	1.5
11. I was able to minimize the failure experiences of my youngsters.	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.3	2.0
12. I was able to create an atmosphere that was comfortable and non-threatening.	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.6	1.5
13. I was able to work with "vulnerable" children and spare them excessive stress.	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.7	0.0
14. I feel that children were able to improve their concept of self.	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.8	1.0

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

Tab 2 (cont'd)

ITEM	Mean Rating Scores				
	Cluster Teacher			RT* N=12 1 Yr.	SMS* N=2 2 Yr.
	N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.		
15. I feel that the program was stress-producing for the sensitive child.	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.6	4.0
16. I feel that children were able to develop independence.	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.8	1.5
17. I was able to motivate pupils who are apathetic.	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.2	1.5
18. I was able to work with children in helping them to accept each other.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	1.5
19. I was able to understand the effect of the classroom experience on maturity.	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.8	1.0
20. I was able to assess the effect of failure on pupil attitudes.	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.5	0.5
21. I feel that students were able to explore areas they may have been fearful of.	2.4	2.9	2.6	3.2	1.0

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

TABLE 3

Summary of Staff Perception, by Mean Rating Score, of Programmatic Effectiveness in Removing the "Artificial" Barriers Between Grades	ITEM	Mean Rating Scores					
		Cluster Teacher			RT*	SMS*- N	
		N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.			
Years in Cluster							
1.	I was able to observe the child in free-play situations.	3.7	3.2	3.5	2.8	1.5	
2.	I feel that the program was too permissive.	2.1	1.2	1.7	0.8	2.0	
3.	I feel that the program was too unstructured.	1.6	1.2	1.4	1.4	4.0	
4.	I feel that the program was able to adapt to age differences in the class.	2.7	2.3	2.5	3.2	0.0	
5.	I feel that the students were involved in the process of their own education.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	0.5	
6.	I feel that the program was too inflexible.	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.5	
7.	I feel that the children are socially prepared to move to the next organizational level.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.3	1.0	
8.	The program was able to adapt to children with a wide range of function.	2.7	2.7	2.7	3.0	1.0	
9.	I feel that children were able to adjust to the small group experience within the larger class.	2.7	3.0	2.8	3.4	1.0	
10.	I feel that the younger children were confused by what went on in the class.	2.5	2.2	2.4	1.4	3.5	
11.	I feel that the program was too structured.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.0	
12.	I was able to make good use of materials and audiovisual aids.	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.4	0.5	
13.	I feel that the older children were confused by what went on in the class.	1.3	1.7	1.5	0.5	2.5	
*RT - Resource Teacher							
*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist							

*RT - Resource Teacher

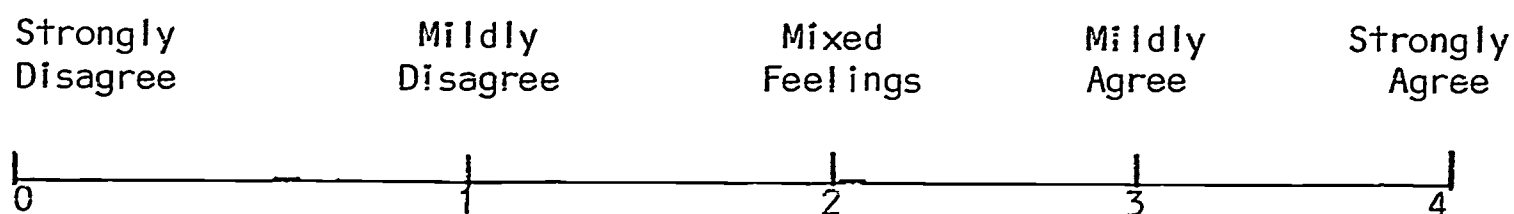
*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

ITEM	Mean Rating Scores				
	Cluster Teacher		RT#	S/S#	
	N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.			
14. The program provided opportunity for impromptu and flexible experiences to be initiated.	2.9	3.0	N=12 1 Yr.	N=2 2 Yr.	
15. I was able to adjust the class day to accommodate children who seem to have short attention spans.	2.4	3.0	2.9	2.7	0.5
16. The program provided opportunity for experiences outside the class.	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.7	0.5
17. I feel that the way children were grouped makes good educational sense.	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	1.0
18. I feel that I was able to raise the children's cultural horizons by exposing them to experiences which may not be provided for them elsewhere.	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	1.0
19. I feel that students were free to work together in areas of common interest.	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.0
20. I was able to get children together in non-academic activities using their special talents and interests.	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.9	1.0
21. I feel that the children are academically prepared to move to the next organizational level.	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.0

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

3. To what extent have teacher attitudes related to project expectation been modified by participation in the nongraded (cluster) organizational structure? Table 4 presents a summary of staff perceptions of programmatic effects of teacher's project expectations. Results are reported by Mean Rating Scores along the following continuum:



4. To what extent has the team "cluster" arrangement for staff, including the use of paraprofessionals, achieved role definition and working relationships? Table 5 presents a summary of staff perceptions of programmatic effects on professional staff role definition. Results are reported by Mean Rating Scores along the following continuum:



Table 6 presents a summary of responses of cluster teachers' and resource teachers' perceptions of teacher aides. Results are presented by percent of personnel response to fixed alternatives.

Table 7 presents a summary of responses of resource teachers' and teacher aides' perception of role definition. Results are reported by percent of personnel response to "Yes-No Decisions."

TABLE 4

Summary of Staff Perceptions, by Mean Rating Score, of Programmatic Effects on Teacher's Project Expectations.		Mean Rating Scores				
ITEM	Years in Cluster	Cluster Teacher			RT*	SMS*
		N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.	N=12 1 Yr.	N=2 3 Yr.
1. I was able to create stimulating and challenging experiences.		2.6	2.8	2.7	3.4	0.0
2. I feel that children learned appropriate listening skills.		2.2	1.9	2.1	2.4	0.0
3. I feel that children learned appropriate writing skills.		2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	1.0
4. I feel that the program encouraged children to develop those traits often subsumed under the words "imagination and creativity".		3.0	2.6	2.8	3.1	0.5
5. I feel it was easy to make the class experience interesting and exciting for children.		2.5	2.2	2.4	3.2	0.0
6. I feel that children learned appropriate number skills.		3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	0.5
7. I feel that the children understand what is expected of them.		2.2	2.9	2.5	2.7	0.5
8. I feel that the children were prepared for the experiences they were exposed to.		2.0	2.9	2.4	2.4	0.0
9. I was able to maintain contact with children when they were absent from school.		2.4	2.0	2.2	0.7	0.0
10. I feel I was able to know the children well enough to have realistic expectations for them.		3.1	3.3	3.2	2.9	2.0
11. I feel that children learned appropriate reading skills.		2.6	3.1	2.8	3.0	1.0
12. I was able to establish a good working relationship with the parents.		3.2	3.0	3.1	0.8	0.0
13. I feel that the program enabled me to get a better understanding of the children in various situations.		2.6	2.8	2.7	2.9	1.5

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

Table 4 (cont'd)

ITEM	Mean Rating Scores					
	Years in Cluster			Cluster Teacher		
	N=22 1 Yr.	N=17 2 Yr.	N=39 Avg.	N=12 1 Yr.	N=2 2 Yr.	SMS*
14. I feel that parents received adequate and meaningful feedback concerning the quality of children's performance.	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.3	0.0	
15. I feel that the parents have an understanding of what I, as a teacher, was trying to accomplish.	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.3	0.0	
16. The children were overwhelmed by what was expected of them.	1.5	1.2	1.4	0.6	2.0	
17. The parents were satisfied with the progress of their youngsters.	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.3	0.0	
18. I was able to understand the needs of children from differing socio-economic backgrounds.	3.3	3.7	3.5	3.4	1.5	
19. The para-professionals (teacher-aides) were overwhelmed by what was expected of them.	1.5	1.1	1.3	1.3	2.3	
20. I feel that students approached their tasks in the anticipation that they would be successful.	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	0.5	
21. I feel that children had an opportunity to play with materials appropriate to their mental and social development.	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.2	0.0	

*RT - Resource Teacher

*SMS - Subject Matter Specialist

TABLE 5

Summary of Staff Perceptions, by Mean Rating Score, of Programmatic Effects on Professional Staff Role Definition		Mean Rating Scores				
ITEM	Years in Cluster	Cluster Teacher		RT#	Cust#	
		N=22	N=17			
		1 Yr.	2 Yr.	N=12	N=2	
				1 Yr.	2 Yr.	
1. I was able to use skills in which I have a special interest.		3.2	3.2	3.2	3.5	0.5
2. I feel I was prepared for the experiences I was exposed to.		1.9	1.9	1.9	2.9	0.0
3. I feel that the team members were able to define common problems with other team members.		3.0	3.2	3.1	3.8	1.0
4. The non-cluster professional staff understood and supported the program.		2.0	2.2	2.1	1.6	1.0
5. I feel I understand what was expected of me.		2.4	2.1	2.3	3.2	0.0
6. The on-going in-service training program met my needs.		1.4	1.6	1.5	1.9	.5
7. I feel that the para-professionals (teacher aides) understood their role.		2.5	2.5	2.5	3/3	1.0
8. I feel that the para-professionals (teacher aides) were adequately trained.		2.3	2.2	2.3	2.7	1.0
9. I was able to derive personal satisfaction from seeing that my professional skills were helping children take advantage of the class experience.		3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.0
10. I was able to maintain my authority in the class.		3.1	3.3	3.2	2.8	2.5
11. I feel that staff morale was maintained over a period of time.		1.9	1.9	1.9	1.4	0.0
12. I was able to have occasional social conversation with fellow teachers.		3.3	3.4	3.3	3.0	0.5
13. I feel that the program was more concerned with the mechanics than with teaching.		1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	2.0

#RT - Resource Teacher

Open School

Open School
New York
2 yr.

1774

Years in Classroom

14. I feel that I was given sufficient information about what was expected of me.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8
15. I feel that the children have a comfortable understanding of me as a person.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
16. I was able to maintain structure and discipline in the class.	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
17. I feel that administrative staff and supervision supported me in what I was doing.	3.9	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
18. I was able to make productive use of class time.	3.0	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
19. I feel that I have been actively involved in the educative process in terms of using my training and skills.	3.1	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
20. I was able to remain objective while maintaining sympathy and sensitivity.	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
21. I was able to utilize the skills of other professionals.	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
22. I was able to implement a logically organized curriculum.	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
23. I feel that I made adequate use of para-professionals (teachers' aides).	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
24. I feel that I had a hand in planning classroom programs and activities.	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
25. I feel I was overwhelmed by what was expected of me.	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
26. I feel that other professionals appreciated my ideas.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9

Tab 5 (cont'd)

Mean Rating Scores

	Item	Years in Cluster	Cluster Location			Mean	SD	N
			N=22	N=17	N=23			
27.	The team members were able to solve common problems identified by my team.		2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.0	22
28.	I feel that I was able to define a common goal with other team members.		2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9	0.0	22
29.	The program reduced and eliminated "workshop pressure".		2.9	3.0	1.7	2.5	0.0	22
30.	I was able to work as a member of a team with other professional workers.		3.5	3.6	3.7	3.6	0.0	22
31.	I feel I was able to reach an agreement within the team in terms of setting and accomplishing educational objectives.		3.2	3.7	3.7	3.5	0.0	22
32.	I feel that my formal training adequately prepared me for the cluster classroom experience.		1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	0.0	22
33.	The social skills and interests of my team members and support staff were used.		3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4	0.0	22

WAT - Resource Teacher
WAS - Subject Matter Specialist

Rating

1. SUMMARY OF THE DATA FOR THE
OF GRADE 1 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE
TEACHER AIDING THE CHILDREN

THE

THE

COMPUTED PERCENTAGE/NUMBER OF
TEACHERS RATED

If you were to grade the overall value of the teacher aide in your classroom, what grade would you give?

A (Excellent)

D (Poor)

B (Good)

F (Very Poor)

C (Fair)

X (Cannot Evaluate)

A	60	A	20
B	32	B	40
C	7	C	20
D	6	D	0
F	0	F	0
X	0	X	0

What help has the teacher aide been to you and the children?

1. Has allowed me to spend more time teaching
2. Has given me the free time I need for myself
3. Has freed me from routine chores
4. Has provided the children with an additional person who can look after their needs
5. Has improved the emotional and learning climate of the classroom
6. Has not been helpful at all
7. Has enabled high school graduates to serve as pre-professionals and helped their formative career plan
8. Has permitted children to see school personnel in other than a teacher role

1.	80	1.	50
2.	36	2.	10
3.	72	3.	40
4.	90	4.	60
5.	72	5.	50
6.	0	6.	0
7.	10	7.	30
8.	65	8.	50

TABLE 9 (continued)

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ADAPTIVE POTENTIAL OF THEIR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENTS' ADAPTIVE POTENTIAL

ITEM	PERCENT			
	GENERAL STUDENTS		SPECIALISTS/TEACHERS	
Do you think that the teacher aide was properly trained for the job?	YES	92	YES	40
	NO	8	NO	40
How long did it take you to feel comfortable with the aide?	A	26	A	30
a. A few days	B	62	B	40
c. A week	C	4	C	0
b. Felt comfortable right away	D	8	D	0
d. Not yet				
Which statement best characterizes your teacher aide's adaptive potential?				
1. Will work well with almost any teacher	1.	76	1.	40
2. Will work well with the typical teacher	2.	6	2.	10
3. Will only work well with a very few types of teachers	3.	6	3.	10
How do you think your teacher aide will handle problem?				
a. Will not speed up	a.	8	a.	0
b. Will speed up before thinking	b.	8	b.	10
c. Will talk things out calmly	c.	72	c.	50
d. Will lose her temper	d.	6	d.	10
e. Will quit	e.	2	e.	0
f. Will become physically ill, tired or depressed	f.	8	f.	0

TABLE 1 (Cont.)

A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS TOWARD THE TEACHER AIDE PROGRAM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ITEM	PERCENT			
	CLOSEST THING		FARTHEST THING	
g. Will work things out without telling them out	g.	16	g.	0
h. Will melt even the hardest heart	h.	16	h.	0
i. Will redirect and do only what she is told to do	i.	4	i.	0
j. Will create problems where none exist	j.	8	j.	0
k. Would harden even the softest heart	k.	0	k.	10
If your teacher aide were to obtain the necessary schooling, what kind of teacher do you think she would make?				
A (Excellent)	A	42	A	30
B (Good)	B	46	B	50
C (Fair)	C	0	C	10
D (Poor)	D	2	D	10
X (Don't Know)	X	12	X	0
What has been the <u>one</u> most important help that the teacher aide has given to you?				
1. Has improved the emotional and learning climate of the classroom	1.	28	1.	10
2. Has provided the children with an additional person who can look after their needs	2.	54	2.	20
3. Has freed me from routine chores	3.	4	3.	20
4. Has given me the free time I need for myself	4.	0	4.	0
5. Has allowed me to spend more time teaching	5.	22	5.	20
6. Has not been helpful at all	6.	0	6.	10

INDEX

THE	CHILDREN				SCHOOL TEACHERS/SPECIALISTS/			
	Excl.	Good	Fair	Poor	Excl.	Good	Fair	Poor
Running office machinery	54	16	10	2	40	20	0	0
Classroom clerical work	48	26	8	4	40	20	0	0
Supervising playground, cafeteria	44	28	12	2	20	30	10	0
Interpersonal skills	52	28	12	2	30	20	0	10
Understanding the school system	38	42	8	0	20	30	0	0

TABLE 7

A SUMMARY OF RESULTS, BY GROUP,
OF THE 1968-69 TEACHER AID
AND THE 1969-70 TEACHER AID

ITEM	PERCENT			
	TEACHER AID		TEACHER AID	
	N=10		N=25	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
1. Did you feel personal satisfaction in your work?	90	10	92	8
2. Did you feel free to make suggestions to the teacher?	90	10	92	8
3. Do you feel that you were accepted by the children?	100	0	100	0
4. Did you receive sufficient supervision?	50	50	84	16
5. Did you usually understand what you were supposed to do?	90	10	84	16
6. Would you like to become a teacher?			84	16
7. Did you have enough freedom to do what you wanted?	50	50	92	8
8. Do you feel that you were accepted by the parents?	100	0	96	4
9. Do you feel your talents and abilities were fully utilized?	50	50	72	28
10. Were you able to work with individual children?	75	25	100	0
11. Was your job usually interesting?	90	10	96	4
12. Do you have enough time to accomplish your job?	67	33	88	12
13. Would you like additional training?	90	10	92	8
14. Do you feel you were adequately trained?	100	0	50	50
15. Did you receive too much supervision?	20	80	4	96
16. Do you feel that you were accepted by the teacher?	67	33	96	4
17. Do you feel the teachers were comfortable working with teacher aides?	100	0	92	8

TABLE 7 (cont'd.)

A STUDY OF TEACHERS, IN PARTIAL,
OF RESIDENT TEACHERS AND TEACHER
AIDES' PERCEPTIONS OF ROLE DEFINITION

ITEM	PERCENT	
	RESIDENT TEACHER	TEACHER AIDE
	N=10 YES NO	N=25 YES NO
18. Were you told if your work was un- satisfactory?	67 33	40 60
19. Did you feel your work was appreciated?	75 25	96 4
20. Did you enjoy your experience as an aide?	100 0	100 0

The following interviews and observational data was also collected:

- A. Structured interviews with Administrators
- B. Interviews with Pupil Personnel Service Staff
- C. Classroom observations by Special Consultants

A. Interviews with Administrators

Structured interviews were conducted with the Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendents, and School Principals. Following, is a sample of responses by question:

1. Question: How has the program been most effective?

Responses:

- 1.1 The Cluster program did "break the ice" away from the traditional approach to classroom organization.
- 1.2 Cluster teachers seemed more aware of the "many facets" of individual youngsters.
- 1.3 It initiated the ITA Reading Program throughout the school. There appears to be a marked gain for those youngsters who had the same teacher for two years. This seems particularly true for slow students.
- 1.4 Better pupil attitudes and behavior.
- 1.5 The cluster program forced teachers to question traditional approaches to education.
- 1.6 Reduced competition and increased desire to learn.
- 1.7 The program encouraged a "team approach" to teaching.
- 1.8 Introduced paraprofessionals into the classroom.
- 1.9 Enabled staff to better understand themselves and others.
- 1.10 Enabled teachers to diagnose learning problems of individual children.

2. Question: What "problems" were created by the program?

Responses:

- 2.1 Teachers have not been prepared to teach in the manner required by the Cluster Program.
- 2.2 Teachers working together create problems not found in the traditional role of one teacher to a class.
- 2.3 In-Service Training for teachers becomes mandatory and methods for this training to be best provided becomes a challenge.
- 2.4 Physical needs and maintenance needs not planned for by administration.
- 2.5 A lack of positive leadership to launch the program; more problems occur when the leadership is not fully committed to the program.
- 2.6 Problems seemed to be caused due to a lack of understanding between parents and school staff and between teachers and administrators.
- 2.7 Teachers seemed not to have had a definite model or plan to guide them in the program.
- 2.8 Teachers seemed to feel that they should have been consulted in the on-going planning of the program. They seemed to feel constantly dictated to by the administration.
- 2.9 Staff reported that they were not given sufficient materials to make the program "work."

3. Question: What do you perceive as the limitations or handicaps of the "Cluster Program?"

Responses:

- 3.1 Physical features of the buildings do not seem well suited to the needs of the "Cluster Program."

- 3.2 Maintenance personnel were not adequately planned for in advance. The Educational Budget is determined a year in advance, that is one year behind the "final educational planning." Therefore funds are not immediately available when needs arise.
 - 3.3 There are no inherent weaknesses in the "Cluster Program." Teachers have the greatest opportunity to meet the needs of youngsters.
 - 3.4 Many times there seems to be no available answers from resource and administrative personnel to the pressing problems of cluster teachers.
 - 3.5 If a teacher gets involved with too many children, she may lose sight of some.
 - 3.6 It is possible that the older children in the cluster will not receive the attention and will not receive the motivation which they require.
 - 3.7 Teachers do not appear to be receiving the continuous in-service training necessary to maintain such an innovative program.
 - 3.8 Initial planning for the "Cluster Program" does not appear to have been thorough enough. For example, the personality of staff should have been a major consideration due to the fact that staff must work together. This consideration seems to have been partially overlooked by the administration.
 - 3.9 Both administration and staff believe that more teacher aides are needed. Instead, there has been a cut back in such personnel for the 1968-69 school year.
4. Question: What feedback have you received from staff, administrators, parents, and children regarding the "Cluster Program"?

Responses:

- 4.1 There has been general acceptance. Some people involved have recommended full implementation for the 1969 school year.
- 4.2 There has been tremendous support from the Board of Education. Principals seem to show strong support and this support appears crucial if program goals are to be realized.
- 4.3 There is a mixed reaction to the program by the teachers. Teachers appear to be for change in the system but might object to the type of change being passed. More teachers appear to be against the "Cluster Program" than are for it. It may be that their negative reaction to the total program is in fact a reaction to their not being involved in program planning. More involvement in planning may help to increase teacher enthusiasm.
- 4.4 Parents appear to be in favor of the "Cluster Program", but when some children do not move at the same rate as others, questions are raised.
- 4.5 Middle administrators appear to have reservations also. Questions such as the following seem to cause concern: "Why does one school receive more support (aides and materials) than other schools?"
- 4.6 The central office supports the program which is evidenced by the intended 1968-69 program. Staff and parents seem to have mixed feelings toward the program.

4.7 Staff not directly involved in the "Cluster Program" do not appear to be in strong support of the program.

4.8 Students do not appear to be concerned with the structure of their education. No matter how it is covered up, they are aware of which groups are fast and which are slow.

5. Question: What additional needs do you see to ensure a more effective program?

Responses:

5.1 Daily planning time has been added to the schedule, a feature which was not present previously.

5.2 Art, music, and physical education teachers have been added to teach these areas in place of the regular cluster teachers.

5.3 Guidance counselors will be put in each building in the 1968-69 program.

5.4 Greater and more effective use of special personnel such as learning disability specialists.

5.5 Greater and more extensive preliminary planning including maintenance, custodial, and building needs.

5.6 More individual exposure of teachers to sensitivity training and working in teams. Also more training of teachers in diagnostic procedures to better determine what abilities students bring with them to class.

5.7 Administrators need training in group processes in order to function more effectively as an administrative team.

5.8 More teacher aides are needed in order to allow teachers to concentrate their time in academic areas.

- 5.9 Attention must be directed to the recommendations of teachers who have participated in the program this year.
- 5.10 More diversified material supplements are needed to implement the philosophy of an innovative program.
- 5.11 More in-service training is needed to prepare teachers for the "Cluster Program."
- 5.12 Greater clerical assistance is needed to coordinate the diversified program. This should not be a duty of the aides. Their function should be primarily as an instructional assistant.
6. Question: What positive and negative changes do you foresee as resulting from the "Cluster Program?"

Responses:

- 6.1 One positive factor is that children will learn to work independently.
- 6.2 Teachers will be able to devote more time to individual behavior problems.
- 6.3 Program effectiveness will depend upon the quality of leadership among administration and faculty personnel.
- 6.4 It may be possible in this program to produce the ideal learning environment for each youngster.
- 6.5 Clustering on a strictly academic basis may not work out best.
- 6.6 The "Cluster Program" has helped youngsters to reach social maturity as well as helping to give youngsters a degree of freedom of expression not attainable in the traditional classroom setting.
- 6.7 The teacher is able to receive a truer picture of each youngster's abilities.

- 6.8 Parents and the community at large will become more interested in the functioning of the school system.
- 6.9 Children with a weak self image might be lost in the cluster with several adult figures. Many of these children respond best to only one adult figure.
- 6.10 Such a program forces the administration to be much more careful in the selection of staff members. This can only tend to improve the system.
- 6.11 Teachers are forced to know their own abilities and limitations in order to function in the cluster with other teachers. Self awareness tends to better the person and the system.

7. Question: Compare the cluster and non-cluster classes.

Responses:

- 7.1 In the "Cluster Program" there is much more flexibility and freedom for students.
- 7.2 Individual needs of students are met much more in the "Cluster Program." The students contribute to their education in the program instead of being the products of the educational system as is true of the traditional approach to education.
- 7.3 In any educational system teachers are the keys to success. Surely, many of the practices and procedures used by good teachers will be similar regardless of the system.
- 7.4 There is no real basis for a thorough comparison.
- 7.5 Although there is little evidence as yet for support, academic achievement in the "Cluster Program" may not be as great as that in the self-contained classes.

- 7.6 The "Cluster Program" opens up the opportunity for far superior education if teachers are able to work well together. The traditional system holds no such hope but may prove to be the realistic approach in the long run.
- 7.7 The "Cluster Program" may only be workable with certain age groups of children and not workable at all with certain types of children. This may also be a criticism of traditional methods of education, but when dealing with a new and innovative program criticisms and limitations must be stated and restated clearly.
- 7.8 Teachers in the "Cluster Program" may be under a great deal more stress due to change than are the teachers in traditional classes. In time this consideration may be reduced if not eliminated entirely. Teachers are also forced to work together in the program where as in traditional classes this is not the case.

8. Question: How has the "Cluster Program" effected your job as an administrator?

Responses:

- 8.1 The "Cluster Program" has made the job harder. It needs a lot more servicing than the traditional program.
- 8.2 Principals should have greater autonomy preceded by in-service training in order to cope with the problems which the new system creates.
- 8.3 There is no standard procedure for record keeping from one school to another.

- 8.4 The "Cluster Program" has created factions within the system, some being for the program and others against it. It is the duty of the administration to try to unite and integrate the members of the system. This is not an easy task.
- 8.5 Principals are forced to hold more conferences in order to successfully run the program. This means more talking to staff and parents which is quite time consuming although highly beneficial.
- 8.6. The program involved additional materials and personnel in order to be maintained. This made the co-ordination of the program much more difficult than that of a traditional program.
- 8.7 Many members of the administration found it necessary to do extensive reading in order to keep up with the day to day problems which the program brought forth. This research has seemed to strengthen the positive attitude toward the program. Possibly such research would be beneficial for all staff members.
- 8.8 The "Cluster Program" has increased the amount of pressure which the job entails. Pressure is felt from staff and from parents. Pressure is also felt in the fact that administration is responsible for defining goals and procedures and for the evaluation of those goals and procedures.
- 8.9 The program definitely creates more work. But this presents itself in the form of challenge. The positions of administration have become far more rewarding and satisfying than was ever true in the past.

9. Question: What recommendations and/or suggestions would you care to offer regarding the "Cluster Program" for the future?

Responses:

- 9.1 The "Cluster Program" must be expanded to include more students, more non-professional help (clerical and instructional), more in-service training.
- 9.2 Purchasing and budgeting procedures should be revised to meet immediate demands of the program.
- 9.3 Principals should be on eleven month contracts.
- 9.4 Administration would benefit from sensitivity and leadership laboratory training.
- 9.5 More care is needed in planning the program. One can use an iceberg for comparison. So much of what is essential is unseen and must be uncovered if successful passage is to be achieved.
- 9.6 Solid, on-going evaluation of the program is mandatory.
- 9.7 There should be "a complete individualization of the operation." That is that each youngster should be placed in a program level to match his abilities and potential.
- 9.8 The same number of teachers should be placed in the cluster for a variety of reasons.
- 9.9 Universities and colleges should become involved in the program. Teachers should be trained for cluster teaching in college. Emphasis should be placed on the team approach to teaching.
- 9.10 A different type of physical plan should be tried in other than an egg-crate building.

9.11 Efforts should be made to involve the community.

Community support is essential for the success of such an innovative program.

9.12 Principals feel that they have the ability to carry the program on their own for a while at any rate.

Some effort should be made to evaluate the degree to which schools should or could be self-sufficient.

A high degree of school independence could lighten the burden of central office staff.

9.13 The "Cluster Program" no matter how successful, is not the whole answer to better education. Specific goals must be set in order to determine the program's strengths and weaknesses.

B. Interviews with Pupil Personnel Service Staff (Special Consultant Report)

Interviews were conducted with the Director of Pupil Personnel Services and with the psychologist and social worker assigned to the programs. The following is a summary of interview data (special consultant report):

"Despite difficulties in setting up the Title III Program, it is off to a good start in Englewood, and has already produced some desirable change in the way teachers and auxiliary school personnel work with children. The major difficulties which impeded the early days of the program were:

- (1) Failure to involve the staff sufficiently in planning for the program, which resulted in low morale.
- (2) Sensitivity of school personnel to community criticism.
Some school personnel believed that the new program implied a blanket condemnation of all their efforts in the past.
- (3) Lack of a full-time coordinator to whom one could go for decisions regarding the program.

Future considerations should include the following:

- (1) Involving the staff more effectively in planning for the program, as well as maintaining on-going meetings for updating and redirecting the program.
- (2) More official recognition of things people are doing which deserve praise. In other words, make a concerted effort to raise morale by "positive reinforcement."
- (3) There should be a full-time coordinator in each school. If necessary, have two full-time coordinators for four schools.

This is a most important recommendation since some of the problems in Englewood in the early days of the program stemmed from a vacuum of leadership.

Except perhaps for item (2), these things are much improved now from their condition earlier in the history of the program. Had these things been handled differently at the beginning, some of the rough spots might have been less troublesome.

There are now more alternatives for dealing with atypical children. Under the old system, the question was whether the child needed a special class. Under the Title III Program the question is more focused on the specific problems a child has and what can be done about this in the classroom. The team approach has led to a greater understanding and acceptance of the specialized information that psychologists and social workers discover about children. Teachers have become increasingly familiar with the particular difficulties that children are having in reading, and therefore can plan more realistically for curriculum patterns and components that will better alleviate these difficulties.

The specific work of school psychologists has come to be spread out over a greater period of time. Under the traditional system, interviewing, testing, staffing, and recommending occurred in a very static way. It took place in a generally inflexible manner. Now, there is more provisional evaluation, with subsequent retesting and reevaluating. The emphasis now is on the opportunity to see progress after a period of time so that further evaluation is needed. One specific outcome of this new emphasis is that a number of IQ's have gone up. Slowly, perhaps, but they have gone up.

The school psychologists have had monthly conferences with teachers, and notes sent back and forth have kept communication lines open in the interim. This factor would seem to be the key technical accomplishment noted in all phases of the Title III Program: freer communication, leading

to improved functioning. As one of the interviewees said: "Title III has helped to break down anonymity."

One practical advantage of the team approach, as it relates to the improvement of case conference techniques, is the greater freedom of teachers to participate in such conferences during the course of the school day. This has led to the possibility for members of the case conference group to see the child in the classroom setting during regular school hours.

The team approach, however, works differently in different schools. It seems to depend most on the quality of the supervision, the controls, the flexibility, and the leadership of the team. "We've made real progress these two years."

With the Title III Program it has been possible to maintain four deeply disturbed youngsters in the classroom. Under other conditions these children would have had to be removed. An important factor in the maintaining of these youngsters in a regular classroom was the presence of the teacher aides, particularly when the aide came from the immediate community. There seems to have been a calming influence in these students' relationship to the teacher aides in their rooms. In all four instances the teacher aides were warm, supportive, interested adults who communicated their feeling of respect and caring for these troubled children. In one instance the teacher aide and the teacher shared their experience in helping a disturbed youngster to control temper tantrums. One suggestion for the future would be greater attention to the contribution of the teacher aide to the learning process through the aide's communication of an adult's interest in the child.

"Ours is a preventive thing." The Title III Program framework has allowed the psychologist and social workers to move in the direction of prevention. They would recommend that in the future this program should function with one school psychologist and one social worker for two schools, rather than four schools, as is now the case. Presently there isn't time enough to plan and carry out what would most likely be helpful measures. This would also make possible an opportunity to "get into the classroom more." By such means the process of referral would be changed greatly, and a more adequate preventive tone would pervade the work of special service personnel. Even in these two years, through more flexible contacts with teachers via the team approach many problems were "nipped in the bud." For example, several potential "fights" were prevented through rearranged seating patterns and different use of classroom space as the result of suggestions from the psychologist to the teacher.

Teachers have felt unsupervised and abandoned for a long time. The program has helped them to feel that they are not alone. "We feel certain that many teachers would say that they have had a good year. We know that we had a good year." There are teachers who changed considerably in their attitudes towards their students. They began to feel that there were ways in which they could work profitably with their classes, and they realized how much real potential for learning there was in their problem students, a fact which they hadn't comprehended before.

Other teachers experienced a change in attitude but not to the extent previously mentioned. One result of the program is the feeling of renewed hope that begins to make its presence felt in the improved classroom work of the students. The teachers are convinced that the children can learn because the children do learn. This reinforces the teachers' feeling about themselves and the value of their work.

C. Classroom Observations (Special Consultant Report)

Visits were made to the following schools in Englewood, N. J.:

1. Lincoln Center - Mrs. Fischel, Principal
Clusters #2 and #3
2. Liberty School - Mr. Guardiano, Principal
Clusters #1 and #3
3. Roosevelt School - Mr. Campbell, Principal
Clusters #1 and #3
4. Quarles School - Mr. Trepicchio, Principal
Clusters #1 and #2
5. Cleveland School - Mr. Heim, Principal

The observation focused on the effectiveness of nongraded (cluster) organizational structure in meeting the stated objectives of the project with the following questions as guidelines.

1. To what extent has the nongraded (cluster) organizational structure, as implemented by the Englewood Public Schools, Title III Program for 1966-68, given the teacher the opportunity to individualize the educative process for children in the program?
2. To what extent have the "artificial barriers" between grades been modified and removed?
3. To what extent have teacher attitudes related to pupil expectation been modified by participation in the non-graded (cluster) organizational structure?
4. To what extent has the team "cluster" arrangement for staff, including the use of paraprofessionals, achieved role definition and working relationships?

The total impression of the observations was that grouping for instruction was made on the basis of individual needs rather than on grade course of study. The extent and the way it was carried out, however, differed with each group of teachers and with each school.

In some cases the teachers within a cluster worked out a very fluid schedule which they were able to adjust to daily needs. They referred to the children in terms of instructional groups or by age range groups rather than by grade grouping. There were a number of successful five year old beginning readers, while some upper sixes were in readiness skills. A very rich individualized reading program and a variety of learning materials were in evidence. Children were able to make choices within the framework of the program so many kinds of activities were happening at one time. The children in these clusters were quite self-sustaining and received help either from the teacher or often very successfully from another student. It was interesting that children could turn to more than one adult, or at times, gain security or reinforcement from just the presence of the second adult standing nearby.

Some teachers liked working in one large room for the reasons observed above and because children had a wider choice of activities. For example: Some tired six year olds left their books and played in what traditionally would have been the kindergarten area while some five year olds participated with six year olds in a dramatization of a story they had read. In these situations the teacher assumed the role of observer and guide and there was evidence that they knew their children's needs in terms of areas of development other than the intellectual.

Their considerations for grouping were based on the total evaluation of the child. One example was a child who was kept with the same teacher because the child needed this security and would be upset by change. Some teachers, however, were uncomfortable in the large room setting either because of conflict of beliefs in methodology or because they felt that there was too much confusion.

The teachers who were successful and enthusiastic about the cluster organization, whether in one large room or in adjoining rooms, were in agreement that the success of the plan depended on the presence of dependable resource people and aides and the "in-service" support of the leadership in the school. The philosophy had to be supported by a variety of appropriate materials, supplementary personnel, a time for planning and an evaluation system consistent with the principle of individualization.

In some clusters where children were scheduled to leave the room for "special help" throughout the day, this fluidity was difficult to attain. Teachers felt there were too many pegs to work around and that they lost their own identity. In spite of this feeling, they agreed that they did gain a great deal in the give and take of planning.

Summary of Observations:

1. individualization of instruction predominated in the clusters observed.
2. The extent to which the organization was used depended a great deal on the enthusiasm and organizational abilities of the teacher, the support of the administration, the involvement of aides and resource personnel, and the amount and variety of instructional materials.
3. More fluidity was present when personnel were assigned in smaller units rather than in complicated schedules of many groups.
4. Teachers who would individualize instruction in any organizational pattern found the nongraded organization allowed for flexibility.
5. The formation of cluster teams cannot be an arbitrary decision, as the effectiveness of the team depends on mutual respect and understanding.

6. As individualization in children is recognized, so must it be recognized in teachers. The plan reached its greatest success with teachers who flourished in the atmosphere of change, the bustle of activity, and the excitement of many hypothesis to be tested, but it could be an organizational burden to those who gain professional security in orderliness and precision.

5. DISCUSSION

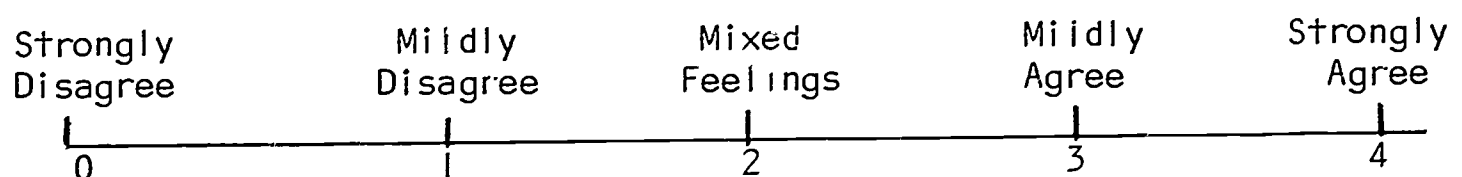
The purpose of this report is to evaluate selected components of the Englewood Public Schools Title III project--A Supplementary Center for Early Child Education (Grant OEG 1-6 6611J-0977, Project #1115) for the school years 1966-68.

Specifically, the study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent has the nongraded (cluster) organizational structure, as implemented by the Englewood Public Schools, Title III program for 1966-68, given the teacher the opportunity to individualize the educative process for children in the program?
2. To what extent have the "artificial barriers" between grades been modified and removed?
3. To what extent have teacher attitudes related to project expectation been modified by participation in the nongraded (cluster) organizational structure?
4. To what extent has the team "cluster" arrangement for staff, including the use of paraprofessionals, achieved role definition and working relationships?

In order to provide answers to the major questions asked by the study, the following procedures were followed:

1. Fixed-alternative interview questionnaires were administered to cluster teachers, resource teachers, and teacher aides. Subjects were requested to react to the questionnaires in terms of the following response continuum:



In addition, subjects were encouraged to write comments where applicable.

2. Structured interviews were conducted with administrative, supervisory, and special service personnel.
3. Classroom observations were made by special area consultants.
4. The data was summarized, and findings are presented in the Results section of this report.

The data generated by the questionnaires, together with an analysis of the comments derived from the interviews and classroom observations, form the basis for the following statements:

A major objective of the Supplementary Center for Early Childhood Education, as stated in the original proposal was:

"To demonstrate that each child's learning and development will improve if instruction is more individualized to account for his unique personality, abilities, learning styles and rate of development..." with special emphasis directed to the development of a wholesome self-concept.

A review of the data (Table I) indicates that teachers felt the program did provide an opportunity for staff to achieve a greater understanding of the developmental needs of individual children. The program enabled them to identify potential problem situations, and to evaluate childrens' progress.

Teachers also felt that they would have liked more time to work with individual children. They cited shortages of appropriate materials, lack of adequate facilities, and insufficient training as problem areas which tended to limit the effectiveness of the program.

Despite these limitations, teachers reported that the program did help children to develop a positive self-concept. The older children, especially, developed good peer relationships and experienced success. Program focus emphasized childrens' strengths, rather than weakness, and teachers felt that, for the most part, the classroom climate was comfortable and non-threatening.

A review of the data (Table 3) indicates that the program helped reduce the "artificial barrier" between grades that often characterizes the self-contained classroom. Children of different ages were able to work together in areas of common interest, and they were able to play together in a variety of activities.

Teachers expressed concern that the program was not geared to the needs of the younger child. They felt that the greatest variation in ability, interest, and maturity, occurred between the five and six-year-olds.

Some teachers also volunteered the observation that the five-year-olds may be confused by the presence of multiple authority figures in the classroom and by the changing nature of their daily routine.

A few teachers felt it was particularly difficult for the child with a weak self-image to work independently; however, they felt this was due to a lack of available time needed to prepare the children for the program.

A few teachers expressed concern that the younger child seemed limited in his ability to take advantage of these experiences, and that unrealistic expectations may be developed by both the child and his peers.

Teachers felt they were able to develop realistic expectations for children based upon a child's background and needs. Teachers felt that they established good working relationships with parents, although many parents had difficulty understanding the "purpose" of the cluster. Some parents felt children were placed in the cluster because of poor academic potential or because they were discipline problems. Parents also expressed concern for the younger child, and preferred a self-contained kindergarten.

Overall, the data indicates that teachers, for a number of reasons, tended to underestimate the impact they had upon the children. They felt that they were "closer" to the children and expressed frustration that they could not devote more time to individual instruction. At least part of the frustration may be attributed to unrealistic expectations that staff held for themselves

in the face of a new program, and the extent to which they were able to achieve role definition.

In reviewing the data pertinent to the effect of program on professional : and paraprofessional staff, a number of converging patterns emerge:

1. Cluster teachers felt they were not adequately prepared to assume a "new" role in the classroom.
2. In-Service Training did not adequately meet staff needs.
3. Teachers felt that their formal (college) training did not adequately prepare them for the cluster classroom experience.
4. Teachers felt they did not have adequate information about program goals, and staff expectations. As a result it was difficult to maintain high morale.
5. Many teachers felt "pressured", by what they perceived to be a lack of understanding and support.
6. Teachers felt that the program did make good use of their professional skills and talents.
7. Teachers felt that they were able to work effectively as a member of a team, and they increasingly learned to utilize the skills of paraprofessionals.
8. Teachers placed value on the teacher aide program (Table 6,7).
9. Resource teachers felt they were able to utilize their skills in the classroom, although they expressed concern that they were not involved in program planning.
10. Subject matter specialists felt isolated from the cluster teachers. They felt they were used as "release" teachers, and apparently never achieved clear role definition. For the most part, their responses to the questionnaire items reflect a disenchantment with the program. On the basis of a very limited sample, however, it is difficult to interpret the data.

11. Administrators felt the program was effective in helping teachers to better understand the individual needs of children, and enabled staff to more effectively work together.
12. Administrators felt that the program effectively introduced the paraprofessional into the Englewood Public School system.
13. Administrators felt that the cluster teachers would have benefited from both pre-service and in-service training, a perception which mirrored the opinions expressed by teachers.
14. Administrators felt that limitations in physical facilities and materials also reduced the potential effectiveness of the program, and these perceptions again mirrored opinions expressed by teachers.
15. Administrators felt that initial planning did not give adequate consideration to problems inherent to "personality" variables. They appeared to feel that decisions came from the "top," although they were expected to provide solutions to the problems which accrued as a result of those decisions.
16. Administrators felt that the program received good support from the Board of Education and the community. Principals and teachers appeared to have mixed reactions to the total program, although they were in favor of specific aspects of the program. Predictably, the components of the program that were supported were the most effective.
17. Overall, the cluster program appeared difficult to "administer," particularly during the transitional period. It was the general consensus by teachers and administrators that effective communication is vital to the success of the program.
18. For administrator's recommendations see Responses, Question 9.
19. For a discussion of interview with Pupil Personnel Service Staff, and for a summary of Classroom Observations, see Results -- Parts B and C.